(b) Does not arise.

(c) The basic objective of the public private partnership initiatives is to strengthen the Railway's infrastructure and improve services to customers. These do not entail any dilution of the public sector character of Railways and compromise of Government's interests.

The guidelines and interministerial appraisal/approval laid down by Government in this regard are fully adhered to.

Agreement between Indian railways and Iran's railway company

1375. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Wili the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Iran have signed an agreement that would help establish a new rail link between Iran and Russia;

(b) if so, whether MoU was signed by the Chairman, Indian Railway Board and Iran's Railway Company; and

(c) if so, what are main features of the agreement reached and by when it is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Gauge conversion

1376. DR. JANARDHAN WAGHMARE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has undertaken the work of gauge conversion in different States; and

(b) if so, how many railway lines would be converted into broad gauge during Eleventh Five Year Plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Target for gauge conversion of 10000 Km of meter gauge / narrow gauge lines to broad gauge has been fixed for XI Plan.

World class railway stations and budget hotels

1377. SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Railways has announced for developing world class stations in the country in the identified railway land;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd (IRCTC) is developing budget hotels on idle railway land in the country;

(c) if so, whether the sites identified by the IRCTC for budget hotels have been selected for developing world-class stations and thereby there is a conflict of interest;

(d) whether it is also a fact that the Standing Committee on Railways also criticized the Railways in this regard; and

(e) if so, how the Railways is planning to address to this issue?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir. Railway have identified 26 railway station in the country for development as World Class Station.

(b) Yes, Sir. At Some of the sites IRCTC has proposed the development of budget hotels.

(c) A few of the stations where budget hotels were proposed to be developed by IRCTC, were later identified for development into world class stations. As both budget hotels and world class stations bank upon leveraging real estate potential of railway land around stations, development of Budget Hotel independently at such stations is likely to have adverse impact on realization of full potential of land to be leveraged as part of World Class Station affecting financial viability of the project apart from creating constraints in overall Master Plan of development of the station into World Class Station. Therefore, on review it has been decided that for some of such sites budget hotels may not be developed as an individual item.

(d) No, Sir. However the Committee on Public Undertakings while reviewing Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Limited have taken note of and sought reasons of delay in finalization of bids for budget hotels (April 2008).

(e) The Ministry of Railways has deliberated on the issue and certain administrative issues are yet to be sorted out. The matter is under review of the Ministry of Railways.

Introduction of new rail services in Rajasthan

†1378. DR. PRABHA THAKUR : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of proposals pending with Government regarding introduction of new rail services in Rajasthan;

(b) what are the norms for introducing new rail services and what are the basis on which the proposals from State Governments are approved or disapproved; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Following trains serving Rajasthan announced in Railway Budget 2008-2009 are still to be introduced:-

(1) 2983/2984 Jaipur-Chandigarh Garib Rath (tri-weekly)

(2) 5667/5668 Kamakhya-Gandhidham Express (weekly)

(3) 2483/2484 Amritsar-Kochuveli Express (weekly)

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi